

Case 2594

***Sarotherodon melanotheron* Rüppell, 1852 (Osteichthyes, Perciformes):
proposed conservation of the specific name**

E. Trewavas

British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K.

Abstract. The purpose of this application is the conservation of the cichlid specific name *melanotheron* Rüppell, 1852, the name of the type species of *Sarotherodon* Rüppell, 1852, by the suppression of the senior subjective synonym *Labrus melagaster* Bloch, 1792

1. *Labrus melagaster* Bloch, 1792 (p. 27, pl. 296, fig. 1) was described from two specimens. The types were stated to be from Surinam, but Günther (1862, p. 267) doubted this attribution and placed the name (with 'corrected' spelling, *melanogaster*) in the synonymy of the African cichlid *Chromis niloticus* (Linnaeus, 1758). Pellegrin (1904, p. 310) also considered it to be African, but not what was by then called *Tilapia nilotica*. Thys (1969) and Trewavas (1983) ignored it.

2. Dr Sven Kullander, in the course of his studies on South American CICHLIDAE, examined one of Bloch's specimens, ZMB 2807, now labelled 'holotype', from the Berlin Museum (ZMB) and wrote to me that he considered it to be African. On examining the specimen I confirmed it to be *Sarotherodon melanotheron* Rüppell, 1852. Although Bloch mentioned two specimens, only this one is now in the ZMB and should be designated lectotype. It agrees very well with Bloch's description and figure.

3. *Sarotherodon melanotheron* is a taxon comprising a chain of populations from the Senegal to the Zaire in brackish waters of lagoons and estuaries. Excluding *melagaster*, eleven names of the species group have been given to parts of this series. Of these, six have been placed in synonymy by Thys (1971) and Trewavas (1983). Four of the other five were treated by Thys as species. Trewavas considered them to be subspecies of *S. melanotheron* and added the fifth subspecies *S. m. paludinosus*. It is not certain from which of these populations *L. melagaster* was derived. There seems no reason why *L. melagaster* should not be a synonym of either *S. m. melanotheron* or *S. m. leonensis*.

4. The conservation of the specific name *melanotheron* is requested because it is the name of the type species of *Sarotherodon* Rüppell, 1852. Fishes of this genus and related genera are objects of world-wide fish culture with a very extensive literature and unnecessary changes in nomenclature are to be avoided.

5. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name *melagaster* Bloch, 1792 as published in the binomen *Labrus melagaster*, for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the name *Sarotherodon* Rüppell, 1852 (gender: masculine), type species by monotypy *Sarotherodon melanotheron* Rüppell, 1852;

- (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *melanotheron* Rüppell, 1852, as published in the binomen *Sarotherodon melanotheron* (specific name of the type species of *Sarotherodon* Rüppell, 1852);
- (4) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *melagaster* Bloch, 1792, as published in the binomen *Labrus melagaster* and as suppressed in (1) above.

References

- Bloch, M. E. 1792. *Naturgeschichte der ausländischen Fische*. Part 6, 126 pp.
- Günther, A. C. L. G. 1862. *Catalogue of the Fishes in the British Museum*, IV. London.
- Pellegrin, J. 1904. Contribution à l'étude anatomique, biologique et taxonomique des poissons de la famille des Cichlides. *Mémoires de la Société Zoologique de France*, **16**: 41–401.
- Rüppell, W. P. E. S. 1852. *Verzeichniss der in dem Museum der Senkenbergische Naturforschende Gesellschaft aufgestellten Sammlungen*. IV. 40 pp. Frankfurt-am-Main.
- Thys van den Audenaerde, D. F. E. 1969. An annotated bibliography of *Tilapia* (Pisces, Cichlidae). *Documentation Zoologique. Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale*, **14**: 1–406.
- Thys van den Audenaerde, D. F. E. 1971. Some new data concerning the *Tilapia* species of the subgenus *Sarotherodon* (Pisces, Cichlidae). *Revue de Zoologie et de Botanique Africaines*, **84**(3–4): 203–216.
- Trewavas E. 1983. *Tilapiine fishes of the genera Sarotherodon, Oreochromis and Danakilia*. 583 pp. British Museum (Natural History), London.